

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 /098 W

-----180834Z 128883 /12

R 171605Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7655

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIRS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN NYK

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1388

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, PFOR, MR

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: POLISARIO INCURSION INTO SOUTH-EASTERN CORNER
OF MAURITANIA.

1. LOCAL SPANISH DIPLOMAT REPORTS THAT ON JUNE 8 POLISARIO CARRIED
OUT SUCCESSFUL RAID AGAINST BASSINKOUNOU (1552N 05 576), A SMALL TOWN
SITUATED LESS THAN 50 KILOMETERS FROM MALIAN BORDER IN SOUTHEASTERN
MAURITANIA. POLISARIO ASSALT FORCE OF UNKNOWN SIZE INITIATED ATTACK
WITH 15MINUTE MORTAR BARRAGE, THEN FOLLOWED WITH SMALL ARMS FIRE
EFFECTIVE ENOUGH TO ENABLE POLISARIO TROOPS TO INFILTRATE INSIDE
BASSIKOUNOU BILT UP AREA. MAURITANIAN LOSSES RESULTING FROM
ENGAGEMENT WERE 8 DEAD, 10 WOUNDED, AND 7 TAKEN HOSTAGE, INCLUDING
A MAURITANIAN ARMY LIEUTENANT. POLISARIO LOSSES ARISING FROM THE
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BASSIKOUNOU ENGAGEMENT ARE NOT KNOWN BUT ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE
BEEN LIGHT.

2. COMMENT: BASSIKOUNOU SPJ S LOCATED MORE THAN 900 KILOMETERS
FROM THE CLOSEST POINT IN FORMER SPANISH SAHARA AND OVER
1,000 KILOMETERS FROM POLISARIO BASE CAMPS NEAR TINDOUF.
ALTHOUGH BASSIKOUNOU IS OF MARGINAL STRATEGIC INTEREST FROM

MILITARY VIEWPOINT, FACT THAIPOLISARIO SUCCESSFULLY ATTACKED POINT WHICH IS FARTHER AWAY FRM THEIR SUPPLY DEPOTS THAN ANY OTHER IN MAURITANIA ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATES IMPRESSIVE POLISARIO LOGISTICAL CAPABILITY. TIMING OF ATTACK IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY: POLISARIO HIT BASSIKOUNOU ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF POLISARIO ATTACK ON NOUAKCHOTT. FINALLY, BASSIKOUNOU ATTACK IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE POLISARIO ALMOST CERTAINLY TRAVELED FROM TINDOUF INSIDE MALIAN TERRITORY, LAUNCHED ATTACK AGAINST SMALL MAURITANIAN TOWN FROM ACROSS BORDER, AND THEN DISAPPEARED BACK INTO MALI AFTER SUCCESSFUL STRIKE. RUMORS PERSIST IN NOUAKCHOTT, FUELED BY RECENT VISITS BY MALIAN DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTERS AND CURRENT VISIT OF PRESIDENT TRAORE, THAT MAURITANIANS AND MALIANS HAVE CONCLUDED SOME KIND OF DEFENSE AGREEMENT AIMED AT CURTAILING POLISARIO ACTIVITY ALONG COMMON BORDER AND INSIDE MALI. WHETHER FORMAL AGREEMENT EXISTS OR NOT, WE DOUBT POLISARIO MOVEMENT ALONG ATTACK ROUTES THROUGH MAURITANIAN/ MALIAN BORDER AREA WILL SERIOUSLY IMPEDED GIVEN DISTANCES INVOLVED EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TERRAIN ON BOTH SIDES OF BORDER, AND MODEST MILITARY RESOURCES MAURITANIANS AND MALIANS HAVE TO COMMIT TO LOCATE, ENGAGE, AND STOP POLISARIO ATTACK COLUMNS.

HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BORDER INCIDENTS, COMBAT OPERATIONS, DEATHS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 17-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770645/aaaabnoz.tel
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Retention: 0
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SAS ID: 2112936
Secure: OPEN
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Subject: SAHARA WATCH: POLISARIO INCURSION INTO SOUTH-EASTERN CORNER OF MAURITANIA.
TAGS: PINS, MOPS, PFOR, PBOR, MR, POLISARIO
To: STATE
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